



Westlands Water District

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August 29, 2007

The Honorable Phil Isenberg
Chair
Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force
650 Capitol Mall, 5th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: New Water Supply for California

Dear Assemblyman Isenberg:

I am writing to comment on remarks you made at the August 21, 2007, Delta Summit regarding water supply for the State of California. During your remarks you stated:

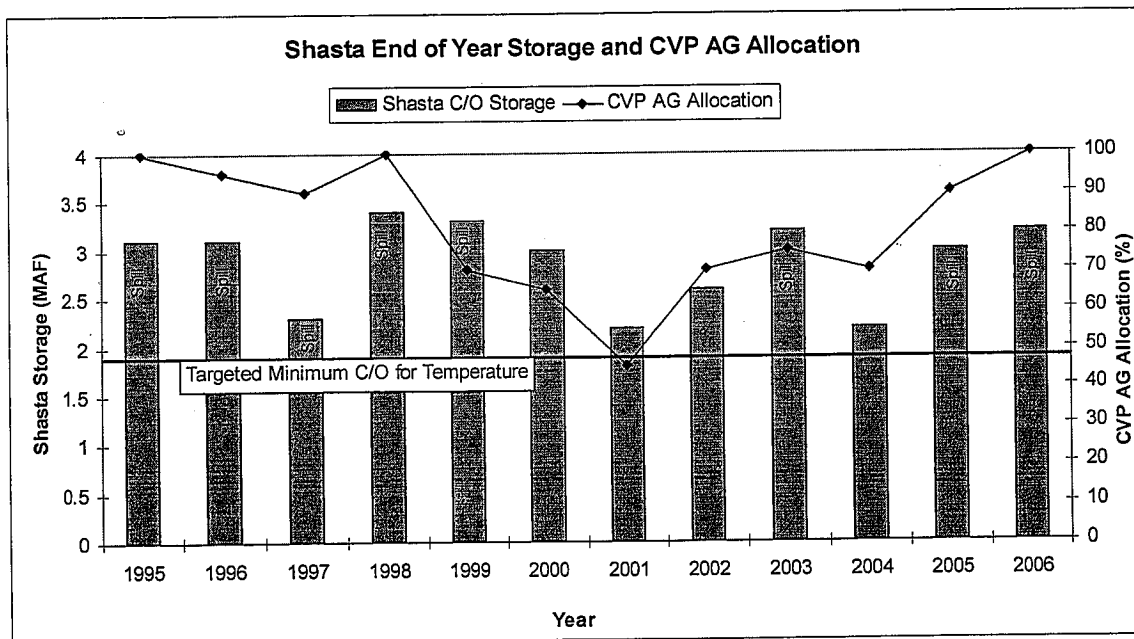
I think it is fair to say, although this is more in the nature of reading tea leaves, that a number of the water voices in California have acknowledged that perhaps there is not an infinite supply of new additional water, not currently being used by anyone and unrelated to the environment that can be magically produced and delivered to someone, somewhere.

You are certainly correct that "there is not an infinite supply of new additional water." However, it does not follow from this fact that through the implementation of conservation, recycling, and reclamation programs, through the improvement of existing infrastructure, and through the development of new infrastructure additional water supplies cannot be developed to meet the existing and future needs of the State. The existing circumstances of south-of-Delta Central Valley Project water service contractors provides a good example of how new or improved conveyance infrastructure would dramatically improve the water supply for municipal, industrial, irrigation, and environmental uses.

South-of-Delta CVP water service contractors receive from the Bureau of Reclamation water that is appropriated from streams tributary to the Delta. Under existing operations, water is released from storage in up-stream reservoirs and conveyed through natural and manmade channels in the Delta to the C. W. "Bill" Jones Pumping Plant, where the water is re-diverted into the Delta-Mendota Canal to either meet direct demand along that Canal or to convey the water to the O'Neill Pumping Plant, where the water is either re-diverted to storage in San Luis Reservoir or into the San Luis Canal to meet direct demand along that Canal.

Prior to 1992, south-of-Delta CVP water service contractors received 100% allocations of their contract supply except during critically dry periods. Subsequent to 1992, however, deliveries to south-of-Delta CVP water service contractors have been constrained because of limitations placed on operations of the Jones Pumping Plant to protect fisheries in the Delta. These limitations have resulted in water supply shortages that were unrelated to hydrology or water in storage in up-stream reservoirs.

This point is illustrated by the graph below, which depicts allocations to south-of-Delta CVP agricultural water service contractors from 1995 through 2006, inclusive, and end-of-year water in storage at Shasta Reservoir. As indicated by the graph, in nine of the twelve years depicted, contractors received less than 100% allocations despite the fact that there was substantial water in storage at the end of the year that could have been supplied to the contractors had there been some means of conveying the water to the Jones Pumping Plant. Indeed, in five of the nine years in which the contractors received less than a 100% allocation, water had to be spilled from Shasta Reservoir to conform to flood control criteria applied to Shasta Reservoir. In other words, water was released from storage to create space in the Reservoir to control potential flood waters. Water released from storage for this purpose could not be recaptured and served no beneficial purpose. In the parlance of the mid-20th century, this water was "wasted."



Reclamation's inability to convey water from where it is appropriated to storage to where demand for water exists has also caused water supply shortages for municipal and industrial water contractors, like Santa Clara Valley Water District, and a failure in many years to deliver "Level 4" supplies to managed wetlands. In addition, this inability to convey water from upstream reservoirs has resulted in needless pain and economic disruption, particularly in San Joaquin Valley communities that depend on the

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agricultural economy. In Westlands Water District, for example, the District has acquired and fallowed in excess of 50,000 acres merely because Reclamation could not supply sufficient water to the District to meet the irrigation demands of these lands. Associated with such fallowing programs is the loss of on-farm employment and indirect impacts on surrounding communities. Among third parties most impacted are small school districts that have lost significant property tax revenue to support their activities.

Improving conveyance through the Delta to enable Reclamation to better meet the demand of south-of-Delta water service contractors will not result in "new" water supplies. It would, however, result in the more efficient use of existing resources. Moreover, as the State grows, it will be necessary to control currently uncontrolled water resources, and it is our hope that you do not have the impression that there are insufficient water resources available to create these "new" supplies. Indeed, in many wet and above average years more water flows out of the Delta in a month's time than is "exported" by the two major water projects on an annual basis. Constructing new storage facilities, both groundwater storage facilities and surface storage facilities, will be critical to meeting these future demands.

Please do not interpret these comments as an underestimation of the importance of conservation, reclamation, and recycling as tools to more efficiently use our existing water resources and thereby create "new" supplies. As stated by Governor Schwarzenegger and Senator Feinstein at the Water Summit, all tools will have to be used to meet the State's existing and future demand for water.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Very truly yours,


Thomas W. Birmingham
General Manager/General Counsel

cc: The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Mike Chrisman
Mr. Lester Snow